Brianna Colon July 15, 2010

Parkchester, the Bronx

In the late 1930s and early 1940s in New York, after marriage, a husband might takes his wife back to live with relatives rather than to their own house or apartment. Housing was hard to find for the middle class. It was quite expensive. Parkchester, however, made inexpensive housing possible. People came to parkchester in the 1940’s because stores were nearby and their living conditions were better than they were before. As a tenant has said, “As a member of the first generation of children born and raised in Parkchester, I cannot conceive of a more ideal environment in which to have grown up.”- Hank De Cillia

Parkchester is a housing complex built by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, in the Bronx. It cost $50,000,000 and has room enough for about 40,000 residents. It is a 129 acre neighborhood that has been nicknamed “the city within the city”. Parkchester broke records and set standards high as well as helped the middle class find affordable housing. It has molded the Bronx into what it is today.

The living conditions of those who became tenants of one of the 51 buildings of Parkchester, were bettered by the availability of space. The amount of land was large 129 acres. The amounts of buildings were vast, 51 of them in total. The number of floors is plentiful, 7-8 per building, according to their model which was shown on May 5, 1939, at the world fair. Such space compared to what they were previously living in is what could have persuaded the tenants to want to choose this housing complex.

This vast space is proved by the fact that parkchester made an order for 97,300 panel doors. So many doors that no one company could take care of it all. They had to call in a second company. Such meaning there was going to be many apartments & much privacy, for the tenants. Privacy is something that those ‘doubling up’ with relatives wouldn’t have had. Also, the buildings were spanned out to take up 35.5 acres of land. The recreational centers and places to shop took up the other 93.5 acres. Such is why those who had not as much room for space came to parkchester.

Stores were built in parkchester to allow tenants access to get whatever it was that they needed. A shoe store was rented out on the northwest corner of Castle Hill and Westchester Avenue. Drug stores were put into union port shopping center in parkchester. The first ever Macy’s branch was put in parkchester as well. All these businesses saw Parkchester as a golden opportunity for their company. The stores to have around 40,000 people relying on their products. Such would want the businesses interest. As well as the tenants interest at having businesses so close by to their apartments.

People came to Parkchester of their own violation for their own ways. But the space as well as the surrounding area containing stores may have made up their mind to become new tenants. These are possibilities. These conditions could have been better than what they were accustoming to. People came to live in Parkchester in the 1940’s due to the fact that the stores were nearby and their living conditions were better than they were before, for the individual.